

Jane Bassett

From: Nona Gold [nona_davis_gold@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 21, 2010 3:52 AM
To: jebassett@austin.rr.com; Jane Bassett
Subject: Overview from history

C16-2010-0009

AN OVERVIEW HISTORY OF OUR CONGREGATION

First Presbyterian Church traces its history to the early years of Austin and the missionary activities of the Reverend Daniel Baker. After a visit to Austin in 1848, Reverend Baker recommended the organization of a Presbyterian congregation in the city. His son, William M. Baker, newly ordained to the Presbyterian ministry, arrived here in May 1850, and organized the First Presbyterian Church on May 26, 1850, in the halls of the Old State Capitol. Among the charter members was master builder Abner Cook, who later built the Texas Governor's Mansion.

Throughout the difficult Civil War period, First Church remained a part of the national Presbyterian denomination, established in 1789, in spite of the fact that most southern churches formed a separate denomination. After 1872, through the leadership of the Reverend Edward Wright, a Union Army veteran, First Church helped to move Austin and Texas beyond the divisive legacy of the Civil War. In 1983, the division among American Presbyterians was healed in the formation of the PCUSA.

The first sanctuary, built at 7th and Lavaca on land donated by Cook, was completed in 1851. It was replaced by a stone structure in 1890. The congregation continued to worship at the downtown site until 1960, when they relocated to Jackson at the downtown site until 1960, when they relocated to Jackson Avenue in north central Austin. Included in this proud past is the sponsorship of Boy Scout Troop #1 in March 1911. This is the oldest continuing troop in the USA.

First Church was located on Jackson Avenue from 1960 to 1978. While there, the church led in the organization of Westminster Manor as a retirement home for senior citizens and also established First Church Day School. Our commitment to these ministries continues today.

In 1978, the congregation moved to its present location on Mesa Drive, near the population center of Austin, a growing metropolitan area. Historic stained glass windows, the tracker organ, and the original cornerstone from the 1890 stone sanctuary were incorporated into the design of the new building.

First Presbyterian Church of Austin continues to serve its members and the community with a variety of worship, educational, and outreach programs. We serve Christ and neighbor in a city shaped by state government, institutions of higher education, high technology, and ethnic diversity. We are First Presbyterian Church, Austin, rooted in the past and looking to the future.